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Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

TO THE MOON!

NASA's record-breaking Artemis II mission captivates the world p2, 3

ARTEMIS

A view of the lunar surface and Earth beyond, taken from the spacecraft on April 6

The launch

Artemis II mission circles the Moon

On April 1, NASA, the US space agency, launched four astronauts into space on the historic Artemis II mission. The mission has carried the crew farther from Earth than any person has ever traveled. It is the latest step toward sending humans back to the surface of the Moon for the first time since the landing of Apollo 17 in 1972.

How was Artemis II launched?

Ten minutes before liftoff at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, a NASA computer began an automated countdown sequence. About four minutes later, the engines on the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket powered up. The 322-foot-tall spacecraft lifted off at 6:35 p.m. in a blaze of fire. Hundreds of thousands of spectators gathered near the space center to witness the launch, and millions of people worldwide watched broadcasts of the event. After eight minutes of flight, the Orion space capsule, which carries the crew, detached from the SLS rocket.

The crew wearing eclipse glasses inside Orion

What is Artemis II's mission?

Following the successful uncrewed Artemis I test flight in 2022, the Artemis II crew has been tasked with a 10-day mission. The spacecraft is traveling about 685,000 miles on a path shaped like a figure eight, looping around the far side of the Moon. Along the way the crew is testing key components of Orion, such as its water system, to see if changes need to be made for future space travel. They are also recording observations of the Moon's surface and doing experiments to learn how deep space affects their bodies. (For more about the crew, see "Astronauts make history" on the next page.)

What has happened during the mission?

On day one, four solar array wings opened to convert sunlight into electricity for the spacecraft, and the crew took control of Orion to test how it flies with astronauts at the helm. On day two, they left Earth's orbit. As they flew toward the Moon, the crew sent back their first high-resolution photo of Earth. "You guys look great," said mission specialist Christina Koch. On day six, Orion passed behind the far side of the Moon, blocking communication signals to and from Earth for about 40 minutes. During this time, the astronauts reached their farthest point, 252,756 miles from Earth—the deepest into space any human has flown. They viewed the Moon's terrain up close, including parts that had never been seen before. The crew captured photos of Earth "setting" and "rising" from behind the lunar horizon and witnessed a solar eclipse as the Moon lined up directly between their spacecraft and the Sun.

What is it like inside the spacecraft?

The astronauts are living in an area 11 feet high and 16.5 feet wide—about the size of a camper van. Its specialized toilet malfunctioned on the first day, but Koch fixed it, jokingly calling herself "the space plumber." The crew is eating mostly dehydrated meals out of pouches and doing daily workouts on a device called a flywheel to prevent their muscles from weakening in an environment with no gravity. There are no beds, so they have found creative places to sleep. Koch chose to hang upside down in the middle of the capsule.

What will happen next?

When *The Week Junior* went to press on April 8, the astronauts were about 200,000 miles away from Earth on their return journey. Orion was scheduled to splash down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Southern California on April 10. Recovery teams will use helicopters and a ship to retrieve the astronauts, who will be evaluated before traveling to the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. (For more on future Artemis missions, see "Lunar program set to continue" on the next page.)

Lunar program set to continue

Artemis II is part of NASA's multi-stage Artemis program, which aims to return humans to the Moon and eventually build a base on the lunar surface. NASA hopes to apply what it learns from Artemis to future missions to the planet Mars.

Artemis III will carry a crew of astronauts into low Earth orbit (circling within 1,200 miles of Earth) in 2027 aboard the Orion spacecraft. Its goal will be to test whether Orion can successfully connect with a lunar lander that will be waiting in space. The lander may be made by Space X or Blue Origin (private space companies) or both of them working together. This technology will be crucial to putting humans on the Moon in Artemis IV.

That mission is scheduled for 2028. Astronauts will transfer from the Orion spacecraft to a lander, which will then touch down on the Moon. The crew will spend about a week conducting experiments at the Moon's south pole before being transferred back to Orion and returning to Earth. This will be followed by Artemis V in late 2028, which could involve starting construction of a Moon base.

From left: Jeremy Hansen, Christina Koch, Victor Glover, and Reid Wiseman

SPICE IN SPACE
Five different hot sauces are on board Orion for the crew to enjoy, along with mustard and maple syrup.

Astronauts make history

The four astronauts on the first crewed lunar mission in 54 years are commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, and mission specialists Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen. In addition to becoming the farthest-flying humans in history, they have achieved individual milestones.

Wiseman, a native of Baltimore, Maryland, leads the Artemis II crew. He joined NASA in 2009 after serving as a fighter pilot in the US Navy. His experience includes a 165-day mission on the International Space Station (ISS) in 2014 and a term as NASA's Chief Astronaut from 2020–2022.

Glover, a former US Navy pilot from California who became a NASA astronaut in 2013, is second in command and steers the Orion spacecraft during key moments. Glover became the first Black astronaut to live on the ISS in 2020. He is now the first person of color to travel to deep space and the first Black astronaut to orbit the Moon.

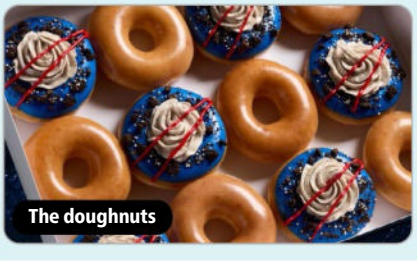
The mission specialists operate equipment, monitor Orion's systems, and conduct scientific research during the flight. Koch, a Michigan native, worked at NASA as an electrical engineer and was selected to be an astronaut in 2013. She is now the first woman to fly around the Moon. Meanwhile, Hansen, a Canadian Space Agency astronaut and former Royal Canadian Air Force colonel, made history as the first non-American to enter deep space.

On April 7, Glover shared a message of unity from space. He said, "This brought us together and showed us what we can do [when we] use all our strengths to accomplish something great."

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

SPACE SWEETS

In honor of Artemis II, Krispy Kreme gave its doughnuts a "mission-worthy makeover," the company said. The launch-day treats had blue icing, cookie-flecked frosting, starry sprinkles, and a red drizzle to resemble NASA's logo.



The doughnuts

A SPECIAL VIEW

The Miami Marlins baseball team was flying out of Florida for an away game against the New York Yankees when the mission launched. As their plane passed by Kennedy Space Center, players got a bird's-eye view of the rocket leaving Earth. "You see this little streak going by us," said pitcher Michael Petersen. "It was wild."

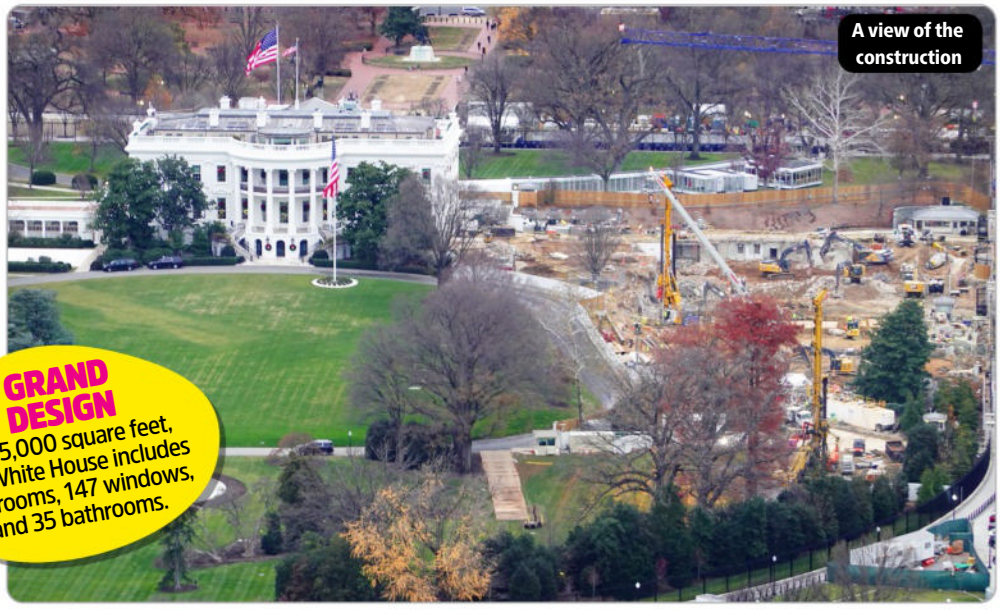
What they saw

HITCHING A RIDE

Orion's crew knew they'd reached zero gravity when a happy little hitchhiker started floating around the cabin. Rise, a plush Moon wearing a cap that looks like half of Earth, was designed by Lucas Ye, age 8, for a NASA contest. Ye said he was "really surprised" his mascot, inspired by a photo from the Apollo 8 mission, won.

Rise

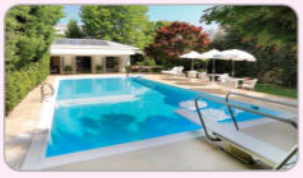
ON THE COVER: NASA, GETTY IMAGES (3); ON THIS PAGE: KIM SHIFLETT / NASA; ARTEMIS; KRISPY KREME; R/DELTA; @NASA ARTEMIS/X; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES; NASA/REID WISEMAN



A view of the construction

GRAND DESIGN
At 55,000 square feet, the White House includes 132 rooms, 147 windows, and 35 bathrooms.

President Ford's pool



Gerald Ford, the 38th US President (1974 to 1977), was an avid swimmer who missed his pool when he moved to the White House. After raising funds through private donations, he had an outdoor pool (shown above) built on the White House grounds. The pool was completed in 1975, and it remains in use today.

White House construction stopped

A plan to add a ballroom to the White House entered a phase of uncertainty after a judge and a US agency issued conflicting decisions about its construction. The addition would be the most significant structural change to the White House in more than 70 years.

What is the plan for the ballroom?

In October 2025, President Donald Trump had the East Wing of the White House demolished to make way for the construction of a 90,000-square-foot ballroom. Plans for the ballroom included an underground bunker where the President and other government leaders could shelter in case of an attack on the US. Some architecture and construction experts have expressed concern that the plans haven't been subject to the usual government approvals and could contain structural design flaws.

What were the decisions?

In December 2025, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), a nonprofit organization that works to preserve US history, filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration to stop construction of the ballroom. It said the plans were not legal because they weren't filed with the required US agencies and hadn't received authorization from Congress (the branch of government that makes laws). On March 31, federal Judge Richard Leon ruled in favor of the NTHP and said work on the ballroom must stop until Congress approves the project. Two days later, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), the agency in charge of approving construction on federal property in the Washington, DC, area, voted 8–1 to approve the ballroom's plans.

How did people react?

Carol Quillen of the NTHP said the judge's ruling was "a win" for protecting one of the most "iconic places in our nation." Will Scharf, head of the NCPC, said he believed that the ballroom would become "a national treasure." Others said the public should be more involved in the planning of the ballroom.

What will happen next?

The NCPC's approval allows for planning of the ballroom to continue, but the judge's ruling halts construction. The Trump administration said it will appeal the judge's decision.

WORD OF THE WEEK

MOON

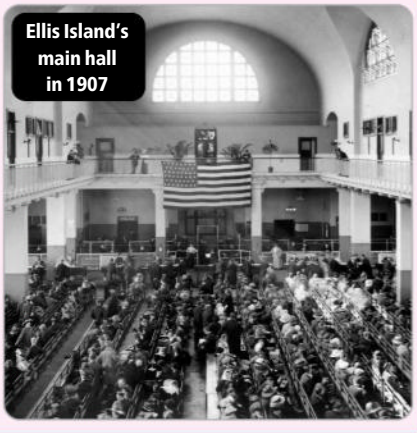
"Moon" can be traced back to an ancient family of words that involve the idea of measuring. As far back as the Stone Age, people measured time by observing the phases of the Moon. The word "month" is a direct relative of "Moon," as is "Monday," which translates as "the day of the Moon."

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

April 17, 1907

Ellis Island has its busiest day ever

On April 17, 1907, Ellis Island in New York City processed 11,747 immigrants (people from other countries), making it the busiest day in its history. Immigrants arrived at Ellis Island from 1892 to 1943, hoping to gain permission to live and work in the US. More than 12 million people were admitted to the country through Ellis Island. In 1990, the facility reopened as a museum.

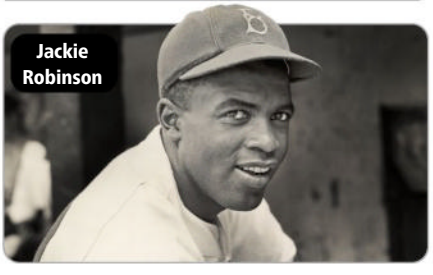


Ellis Island's main hall in 1907

Viewing the documents

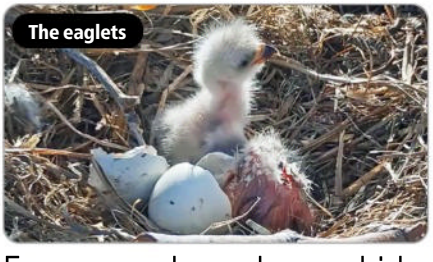
Historic documents displayed

For the first time in 75 years, a change has been made to the displays in the rotunda (grand circular entrance) of the National Archives in Washington, DC. The Emancipation Proclamation, which called for slavery to be abolished in 1863, and the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote in 1920, are now featured alongside three famous documents from the 1700s: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.


Jackie Robinson

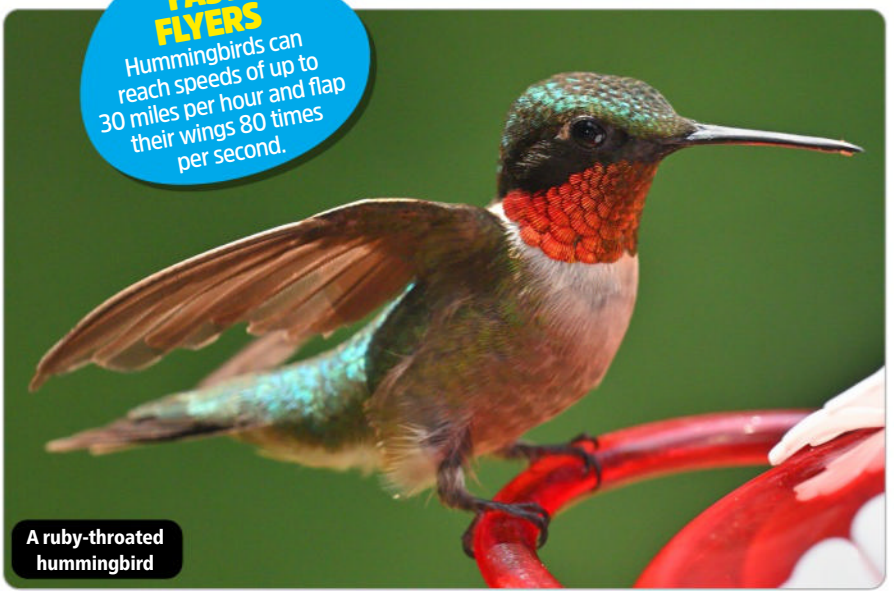
Baseball legend to be celebrated

On April 15, Major League Baseball (MLB) will honor the legacy of its first Black player, Jackie Robinson (1919–1972). Players on all 30 teams will wear his number, 42. Robinson made his debut on April 15, 1947, playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers and ending 80 years of segregation in the sport. He became one of the league's top players and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1962.


The eaglets

Famous eagles welcome chicks

Bald eagle mates Jackie and Shadow, whose nest is in Big Bear, California, have welcomed two eaglets. On April 3, watchers noticed a crack in an eggshell. The next day, the first chick was born, followed by the second chick the day after that. Last year, the pair successfully raised two eaglets, known as Sunny and Gizmo. The livecam of the nest can be viewed at friendsofbigbearvalley.org.



A ruby-throated hummingbird

Hummingbirds migrate through US

A northward migration of hummingbirds from Central America to the US is underway. The birds have already been sighted as far north as Washington on the West Coast and New Jersey on the East Coast, according to a map of sightings released by Hummingbird Central, a website dedicated to tracking the birds in North America.

All 366 recognized species of hummingbirds live in the western hemisphere, including about 17 that nest in the US. Although hummingbirds eat insects and tree sap, their main food source is nectar in flowers. When hummingbirds get nectar, they enable flowers to pollinate (a key step in plant reproduction), which helps the environment. Hummingbirds feed from a variety of flowers but prefer ones with red or orange petals.

Although some hummingbird species live in the same area all year, most migrate to gain access to a greater number of flowers and other food. They will remain in the US for most of the summer before flying south in the fall.

Hummingbirds can travel more than 500 miles during migration, including up to 23 miles a day. The birds are not social animals, so they typically fly alone when migrating. The most common hummingbird to migrate through the eastern US is the ruby-throated hummingbird. Rufous hummingbirds and Allen's hummingbirds are commonly seen migrating through the West.

People can support hummingbirds as they migrate, experts said. Planting flowers for them to feed on, such as bee balm, cardinal flower, coral honeysuckle, and trumpet vine, is helpful. Other ideas include setting up a hummingbird feeder filled with water mixed with white sugar and installing a place for hummingbirds to bathe, such as a small fountain. Experts strongly advise against using chemicals that kill insects hummingbirds feed on, such as mosquitoes, fruit flies, and ants. The full map of this season's hummingbird sightings can be found at tinyurl.com/TWJUS-2026hummingbirds.

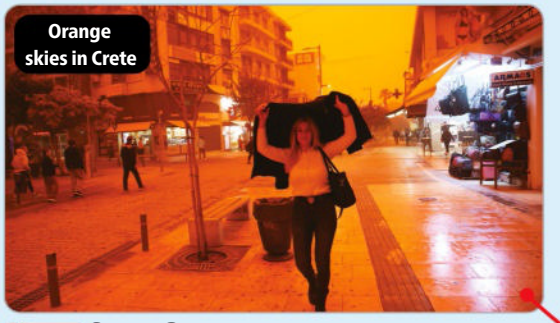
Trumpet vine provides nectar to hummingbirds.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Syrup spill closes California highway for nearly 9 hours" *UPI*

GETTY IMAGES (4); REDUX; COURTESY OF BIG BEAR BALD EAGLE LIVE NEST/YOUTUBE; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3); THE WHITE HOUSE AND PRESIDENT'S PARK/FACEBOOK

Around the world


Orange skies in Crete

Crete, Greece
Dust storm sweeps through island

The blue skies above the Greek island of Crete turned orange on April 2 when strong winds blew in sand from the Sahara desert in North Africa, shrouding the area in red dust. The dust storm disrupted some flights and ferries, and many residents were seen wearing masks to protect themselves. The event follows Storm Erminio, which battered the island with heavy rain, strong winds, and bursts of hail.

The victorious team

Democratic Republic of Congo
A historic World Cup qualification

The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo declared April 1 a national public holiday to celebrate the country's soccer team making it into the FIFA World Cup 2026. The team beat Jamaica, 1–0, on March 31, qualifying for the Cup for the first time in 52 years. Former Manchester United defender Axel Tuanzebe scored the game's only goal in extra time.

Jonathan

St. Helena, United Kingdom
Public reassured about oldest tortoise

Recent online reports that the world's oldest living land animal had died are false. Jonathan, a Seychelles tortoise who is about 193 years old and lives in the British territory of St. Helena, "is very much alive," according to his veterinarian, Joe Hollins. A fake account on social media claimed the tortoise had died and sought donations. Jonathan is believed to have been born in about 1832.

The Netherlands
New Apple museum opens

A museum celebrating 50 years of the technology company Apple has opened in Utrecht. It is the largest Apple museum in Europe, with more than 5,000 products, including the original Macintosh computer, on display. Exhibits trace Apple's history from its founding by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in a suburban home in Los Altos, California, in 1976.

The museum's founders

La Paz, Bolivia
Clowns protest

Dozens of clowns marched in the streets of La Paz on March 30 to protest a new government rule that says schools must teach for 200 days a year. This will limit the time that is available for special events such as festivals, when schools often hire clowns for entertainment. One clown told a reporter, "Children need to laugh." The government said it will consider the clowns' complaints before the 2027 school year.

At the protest

GETTY IMAGES (5); ROYAL CARIBBEAN; EUROVISION; ALAMY (3)

Around the world

Turin, Italy
A KitKat heist

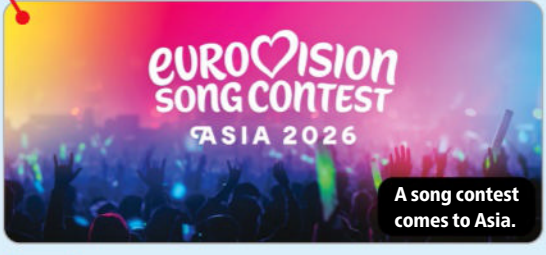
A truck carrying more than 400,000 KitKat bars was stolen last week while traveling from Italy to Poland, where plans had been made to distribute them across Europe. The bars were shaped like racing cars and were intended to celebrate KitKat becoming the official chocolate bar of Formula 1, the international racing competition.

India
Largest census begins

India, the most populated country in the world, has begun its largest-ever census to take a new official population count. The previous census in 2011 recorded 1.21 billion people, and the population is now estimated to be 1.4 billion. Information will be recorded using an app that can be read in 16 languages. The new census results are expected to reshape welfare programs and how the country is governed.

Vanuatu
Resort plan raises concerns

A planned private beach resort for tourists could cause environmental damage in Vanuatu, a chain of islands in the Pacific Ocean, according to Indigenous (first to inhabit a place) leaders. The cruise company Royal Caribbean, which is planning the resort, told *The Guardian* it was working with local chiefs "to ensure the natural environment is protected." The island leaders have asked for construction to be delayed until further review.



Bangkok, Thailand
Eurovision heads east

Asia is getting its own edition of the Eurovision Song Contest, with the final to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, in November. Ten countries have confirmed they will be participating, including Bangladesh, Laos, the Philippines, and South Korea—the home of K-pop. The original contest, which celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2026, is watched by more than 100 million people each year.

Indonesia
Earthquake hits

A huge earthquake struck Indonesia, damaging buildings and causing tsunami waves (giant waves caused by an earthquake or its aftershocks). At least one person was killed, and others were injured. The worst-hit area was Ternate, an island in the northeast. The quake reached 7.4 on the Richter scale, which measures an earthquake's magnitude. Indonesia is one of the most seismically active regions in the world and experiences thousands of earthquakes each year.

Should recess be totally free time?

Some people say students should get to choose what to do on their break.

What you need to know

- **Traditionally, school recess is unstructured time for students to play and exercise outdoors, choosing their own activities.**
- **Many schools are moving to structured recess. That's when adults lead students through one activity or offer them a small number of activities to choose from.**
- **Some schools have gotten rid of recess altogether to focus on academics, reduce disciplinary issues, and prevent injuries.**

HAPPY TRADITION
Recess breaks were first introduced for students in England in the 1600s and became standard in the US in the 1940s.

Recess is more than just a break from sitting in the classroom—it's one of the most fun parts of the school day. It also gives kids a chance to blow off steam, clear their heads, and be active. Whether students choose to play tag, talk to friends, or simply sit in the sun reading a book, recess offers freedom. Many educators believe that letting kids do whatever they want is the best use of that time. At some schools, however, kids have to choose from a set of specific activities during recess, and often they participate in them together. Some educators say this is better for kids and prevents other issues from arising. What do you think? Should recess be totally free time?

Yes—choice is important for kids

Kids spend so many hours a day in class, doing homework, and going to after-school lessons or practice. They deserve some free time with no pressure. And not every student loves playing four square or climbing on the jungle gym. Letting them choose what they want to do empowers them and lets them engage in activities that interest them. Sure, sometimes kids can argue or get frustrated when they play together. But that also gives them a chance to develop their problem-solving and social skills and learn how to get along with others. Teachers or staff can always be nearby to help out if necessary and keep recess safe for everyone.

No—structure makes things fair

Not every student feels comfortable joining games on the playground. That's not a problem when adults are around to help manage recess. They can make sure everyone gets a turn and no one is left out, regardless of their ability or skill level. Structured recess also helps prevent kids from getting into arguments about the rules of a game or whose turn it is. They are also less likely to skin a knee or bump their head, which makes it more fun for everyone—and isn't fun the point? If everyone takes part in certain activities, they can all return to class refreshed and able to focus on schoolwork, making them better learners.

YES Three reasons recess should be totally free time

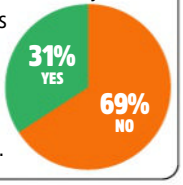
1. **During a long, structured day at school, students deserve the time and freedom to choose their own activities.**
2. **Not every child enjoys sports or games like tag. Some just want to read a book or talk to their friends at recess.**
3. **When kids figure out how to play together, they develop important life skills.**

NO Three reasons recess should not be totally free time

1. **Structured recess means everyone gets a turn and no one feels left out.**
2. **When recess is monitored, kids are less likely to get into arguments or hurt themselves.**
3. **If all students take part in the activities, everyone gains the benefits of recess and returns to class ready to learn.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked whether lip-synching should be allowed. More than two thirds of you said no, songs should be sung live at a concert performance.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think recess should be totally free time or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

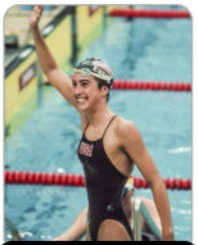
The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

Making big waves

Swimming icon Janet Evans is being recognized for her career and impact.

Olympian Janet Evans is one of the most accomplished swimmers in US history. On March 19, she was inducted into the California Hall of Fame for both her achievements in the pool and her influence in sports. She is also playing a key role in the 2028 Summer Olympics in her home state by serving as Chief Athlete Officer.


At the 1988 Olympics

Raised in Placentia, California, Evans began swimming at her local YMCA at about age 2 and competing at age 5. As a teen, she earned three national titles in one meet and set world records in the 800-meter and 1,500-meter freestyle events. She also became the first woman to swim the 1,500-meter race in under 16 minutes.

Evans made her Olympic debut in 1988, at age 17. She won three gold medals and set a world record in the 400-meter freestyle. She went on to compete in two more Olympics in 1992—winning a gold and silver medal—and 1996. Some of her world records stood for nearly 20 years before they were broken.

At the California Hall of Fame induction ceremony, Evans said, "I'm just a girl who grew up in north Orange County who likes to swim."

As Chief Athlete Officer for the 2028 Los Angeles Games, she is overseeing the athlete experience, from training facilities to housing. Evans described that role as a "full circle" moment. She attended the opening ceremony of the last Olympics held in that city as a 12-year-old in 1984 and told NBC Los Angeles that those Games inspired her to "find the dream that I could become an Olympian."

Janet Evans

FUN FACT
Janet Evans was given the nickname "Miss Perpetual Motion" at the 1988 Olympics because of her high-energy "windmill" stroke.

Architect is honored

Smiljan Radić Clarke has received the 2026 Pritzker Architecture Prize, the most prestigious honor in the field. Clarke, of Santiago, Chile, found his passion at age 14 when designing a building for a school assignment. The more than 60 projects he has completed worldwide are known for their imaginative design and use of materials from local surroundings. Clarke's most famous works include a restaurant balanced on large rocks in Chile and a doughnut-shaped pavilion in England. The Pritzker jury called his work "optimistic and quietly joyful."

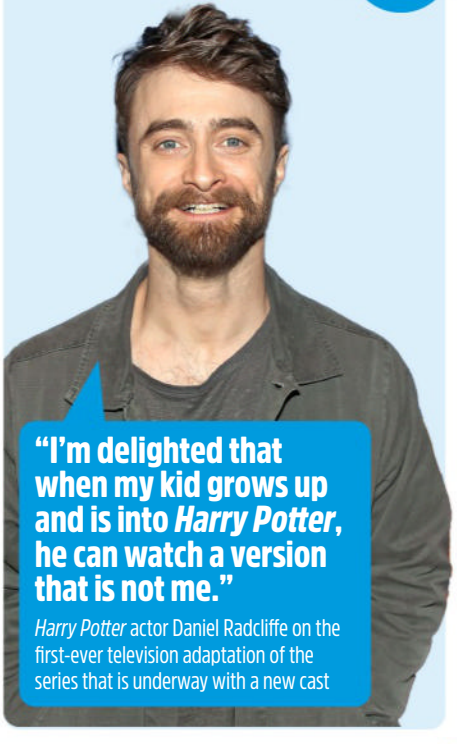
Smiljan Radić Clarke

Lizzo

Writing a new tune

Singer-songwriter Lizzo is now a published author with her debut picture book, *Lil Lizzo Meets Sasha B. Flootin'*. It was inspired by her childhood as a classically trained flutist and features illustrations by Mark Pett. The book follows a young girl who feels like an outsider until she meets a flute without a tune. Together, they travel through jungles and oceans to find their voices. Lizzo hopes the book shows young people that passion can give them purpose. "The only way to find your voice is by being yourself and trusting yourself," she told CBS.

OVERHEARD



"I'm delighted that when my kid grows up and is into *Harry Potter*, he can watch a version that is not me."

Harry Potter actor Daniel Radcliffe on the first-ever television adaptation of the series that is underway with a new cast

GETTY IMAGES (4); COURTESY OF THE PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE

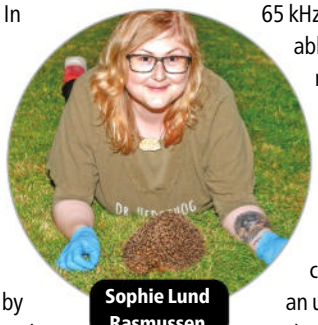
NEED FOR SPEED
Although they are known for their slow waddle, hedgehogs can run up to 6 miles per hour if they need to.

A western European hedgehog

Hedgehogs' sonic superpower

A new study has found that hedgehogs have incredibly sensitive hearing. The animals can hear high-pitched sounds that humans, cats, and dogs can't detect, according to scientists. Because of this, experts now hope that special noise-making devices could be built to help keep western European hedgehogs out of danger.

These hedgehogs live across many parts of the continent of Europe. In 2024, the International Union for Conservation of Nature upgraded the hedgehogs' status from "least concern" to "near threatened" on its Red List. Collision with cars is a big factor in the species' decline. According to one study, about one in three hedgehogs is killed by a vehicle when crossing a road. Sophie Lund Rasmussen, from the University of Oxford in England, had the idea to build a sound device that could scare hedgehogs away from streets. But first she needed to know how good the animals' hearing was.

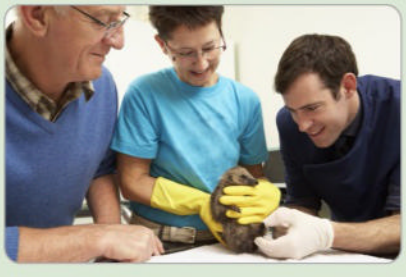


Sophie Lund Rasmussen

Researchers worked with 20 hedgehogs from Danish wildlife rescue centers, studying how their brains responded to short bursts of sound. They found that there was brain activity when hedgehogs heard frequencies between 4 and 85 kilohertz (kHz). Frequency measures how much a sound wave vibrates in one second. Anything over 20 kHz, which is the upper limit of human hearing, is in the "ultrasonic" range. Dogs can hear up to 45 kHz, and cats can hear up to 65 kHz. In other words, hedgehogs are able to detect super high-pitched noises that humans, dogs, and cats can't hear.

Experts said more research is needed to find out which sounds hedgehogs dislike. Once they discover this, they could design a device that emits an ultrasonic noise. This could be attached to cars and lawnmowers to scare hedgehogs away from danger without bothering humans or most pets. The findings also raise the possibility that hedgehogs are talking to one another in a high-pitched chatter that is hidden from humans. "Imagine that they're actually blabbering all the time and we just couldn't hear it," Rasmussen told BBC News.

New "hogspital" opens in the UK



A new hedgehog rescue and rehabilitation center has opened in Cornwall, UK. Prickles & Paws Hedgehog Rescue cares for hedgehogs that have been injured, often due to accidents in people's yards. Rather than running away when they're afraid, hedgehogs' usual defense method is to roll up into a ball, which leaves them at risk of being cut by grass trimmers.

Originally operating from a home, Prickles & Paws raised nearly $400,000 to build the new hospital. It has first aid equipment and rehabilitation areas so the animals can be treated and restored to full health. With the increased capacity of the new site, the team can take in about 1,400 hedgehogs each year.

FUN FINGERS Raccoons have nimble fingers that help them turn knobs and open jars and garbage cans.

A raccoon

Raccoons like problem-solving

Famously clever creatures, raccoons have been known to solve problems when looking for food, such as figuring out how to get into garbage cans. Yet a new study has found that the animals also solve puzzles for the love of the game.

In the study, researchers gave raccoons a puzzle box. There were multiple ways to open the box and access a marshmallow as a reward. When the team let the raccoons keep the box even after they had eaten the marshmallow, the raccoons continued playing with the box and looking for new ways to open it. This suggests that the raccoons were trying to solve the puzzles for their own enjoyment. Scientists call this behavior "information foraging."

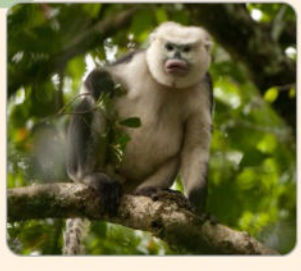
This natural curiosity and motivation to seek solutions could help explain how raccoons succeed in city environments, where there are always new obstacles getting in the way of food. "Of course, that might annoy some of us, but we can admire raccoons' ability to thrive alongside us," the study's authors said.

Animal of the week: Sand cat

Two sand kittens were recently born at the North Carolina Zoo. Experts are also uncovering new details about these felines' territories, habits, and social lives after fitting sand cats with GPS collars for the first time in their native Saudi Arabia.

- **LIFESPAN:** Up to 17 years in captivity
- **HABITAT:** Deserts in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East
- **SIZE:** Adults weigh 2 to 7 pounds
- **DIET:** Birds, hares, and small rodents
- **FUN FACT:** They are called "ghosts of the desert" because they leave no tracks.

Good week / Bad week



Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys

This species was once thought to be almost extinct, but a new count in northern Vietnam shows that the population is stable. Researchers counted about 160 monkeys in the Khau Ca forest region, and 250 are believed to be alive worldwide.

A new tree species

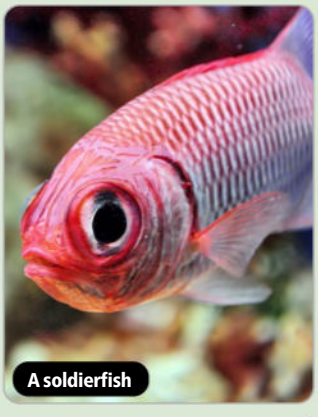
A tree species that was recently discovered in Panama has already been categorized as critically endangered. Clusia nanophylla is special because it absorbs carbon dioxide from the air at night, while most plants do this only in daytime.

ASK AN EXPERT

"How do animals that breathe underwater sift through the water and oxygen?" Leah, 12, Michigan

Sara Lesser
Education supervisor,
Aquarium of the Pacific

Fish breathe using their gills. They take water into their mouth, across their gills, and then out of their body through a flap behind their eye called the operculum. Thin tissue in the gills lets oxygen from the water enter the fish's body and carbon dioxide exit the body, like our lungs do with air.



A soldierfish

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about Aquarium of the Pacific at aquariumofpacific.org.

GETTY IMAGES (3); ALAMY; ERNESTO CAMPOS-PINEDA, STRI; ON LEFT PAGE: SWNS; GETTY IMAGES (2)

Waddling wonders in

Penguins have evolved to live in some of the world's harshest habitats.

For about 62 million years, penguins have lived on Earth. Let's dive in to learn more about these captivating aquatic birds.

A penguin underwater

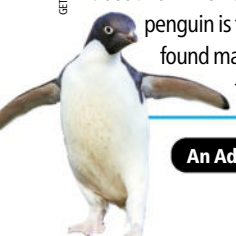
What are penguins?

The animals are descendants of ancestral seabirds that could fly. Over millions of years, penguins are believed to have lost their ability to fly as their wings (called flippers) became more specialized for swimming. Penguins are famous for their black-and-white coloring, which helps camouflage them from predators such as leopard seals, sharks, and sea lions. Their white belly blends in with the sea's bright surface, while their dark backs help conceal them in deep water. Humans likely first encountered penguins in 1488, when Portuguese explorers saw them at the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. In 1497, one of the earliest documented descriptions of penguins described the birds as duck-sized, flightless, and noisy.

A rockhopper penguin

Different species

There are 18 species of penguins. Some have distinct features. For example, rockhopper penguins have yellow and black plumes. The largest species, the Emperor penguin, can reach 4 feet tall. The blue penguin is the smallest, measuring about 1 foot tall. Adélie penguins are among the world's most common penguins, with about 10 million adults found in the wild. The rarest penguin is the hoiho, a yellow-eyed species found mainly in New Zealand, with fewer than 5,000 left in the wild.

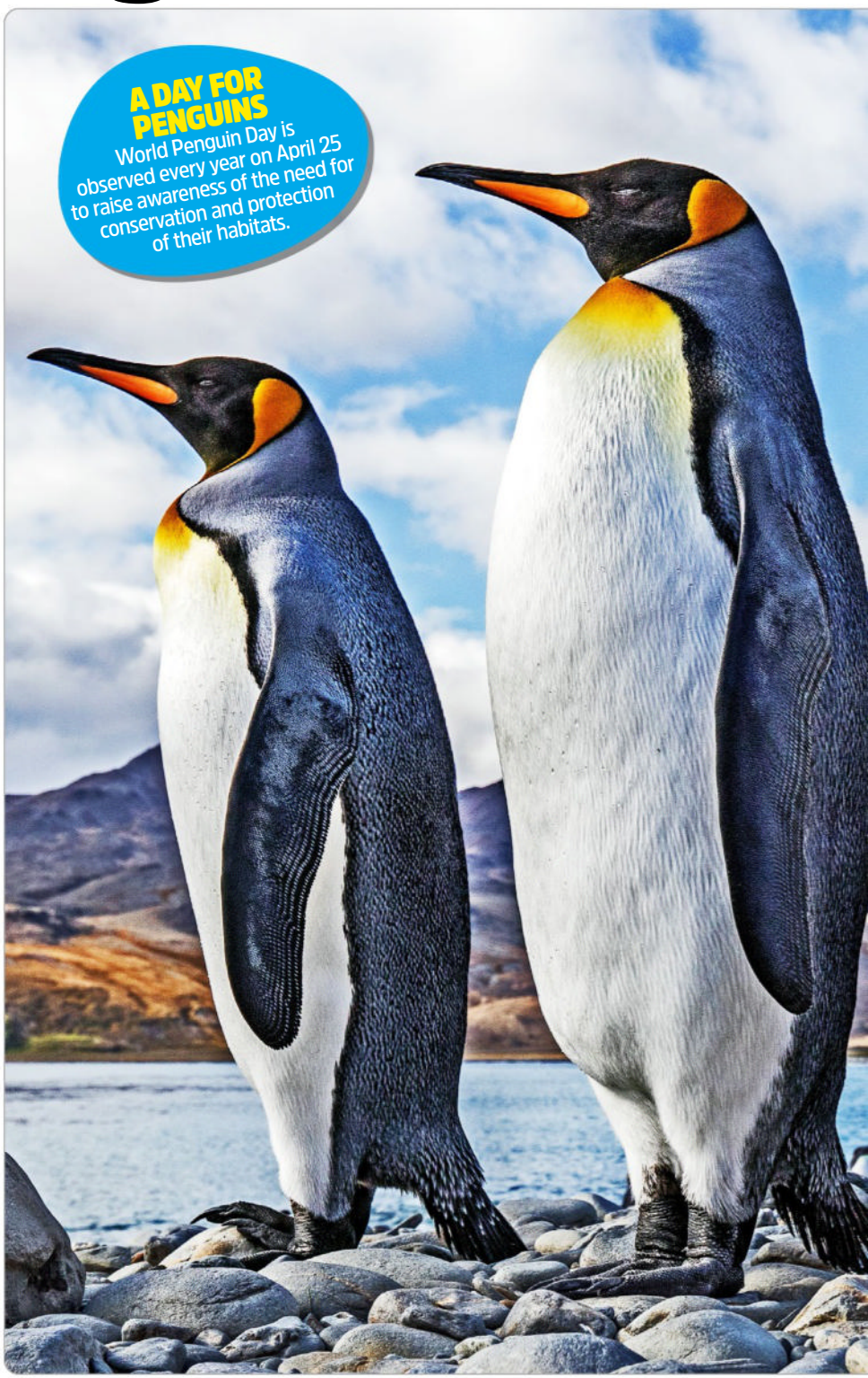


GETTY IMAGES

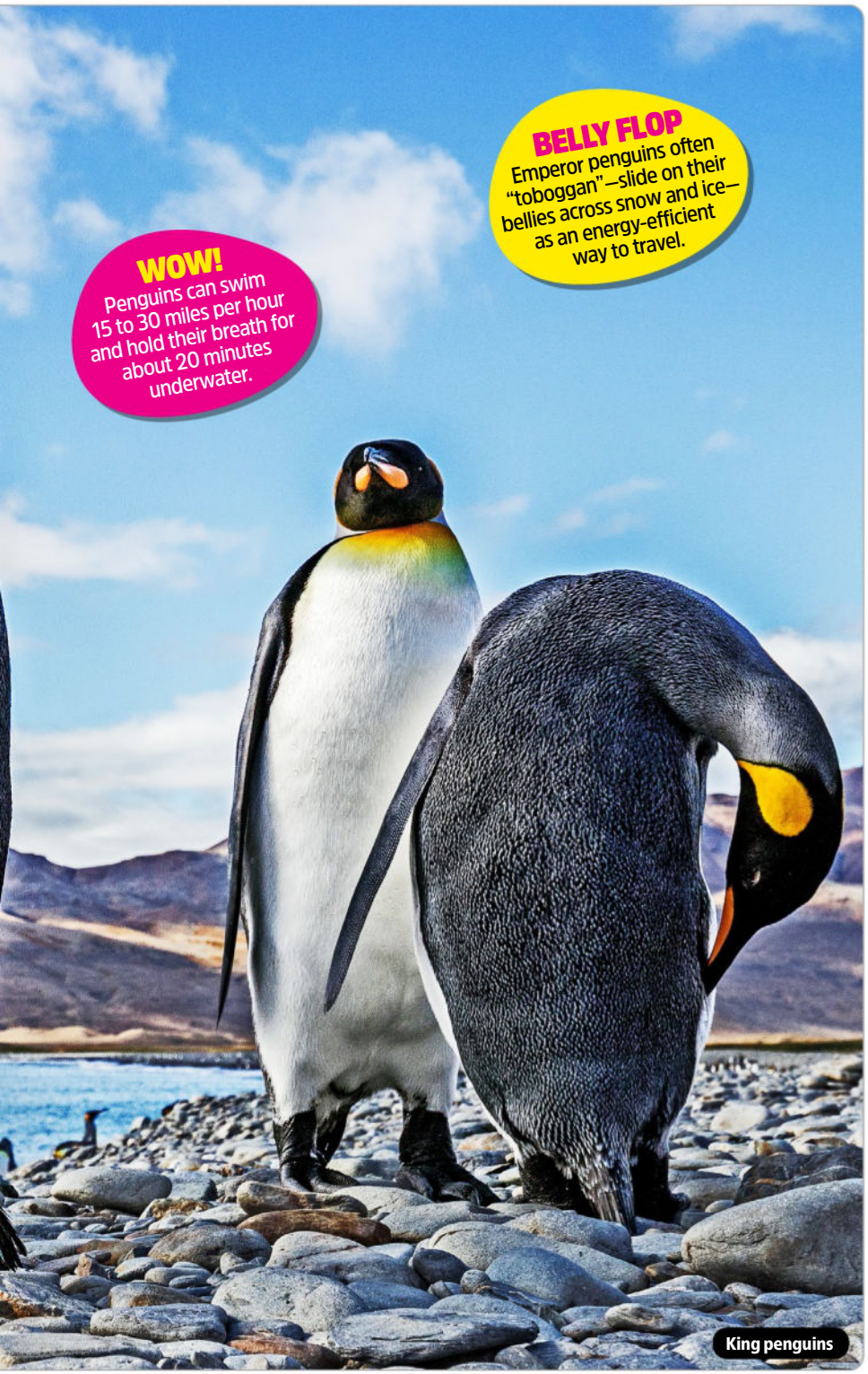
An Adélie penguin

A DAY FOR PENGUINS

World Penguin Day is observed every year on April 25 to raise awareness of the need for conservation and protection of their habitats.



distant lands



WOW! Penguins can swim 15 to 30 miles per hour and hold their breath for about 20 minutes underwater.

BELLY FLOP Emperor penguins often "toboggan"—slide on their bellies across snow and ice—as an energy-efficient way to travel.

King penguins

Mother and baby gentoos

Daily life

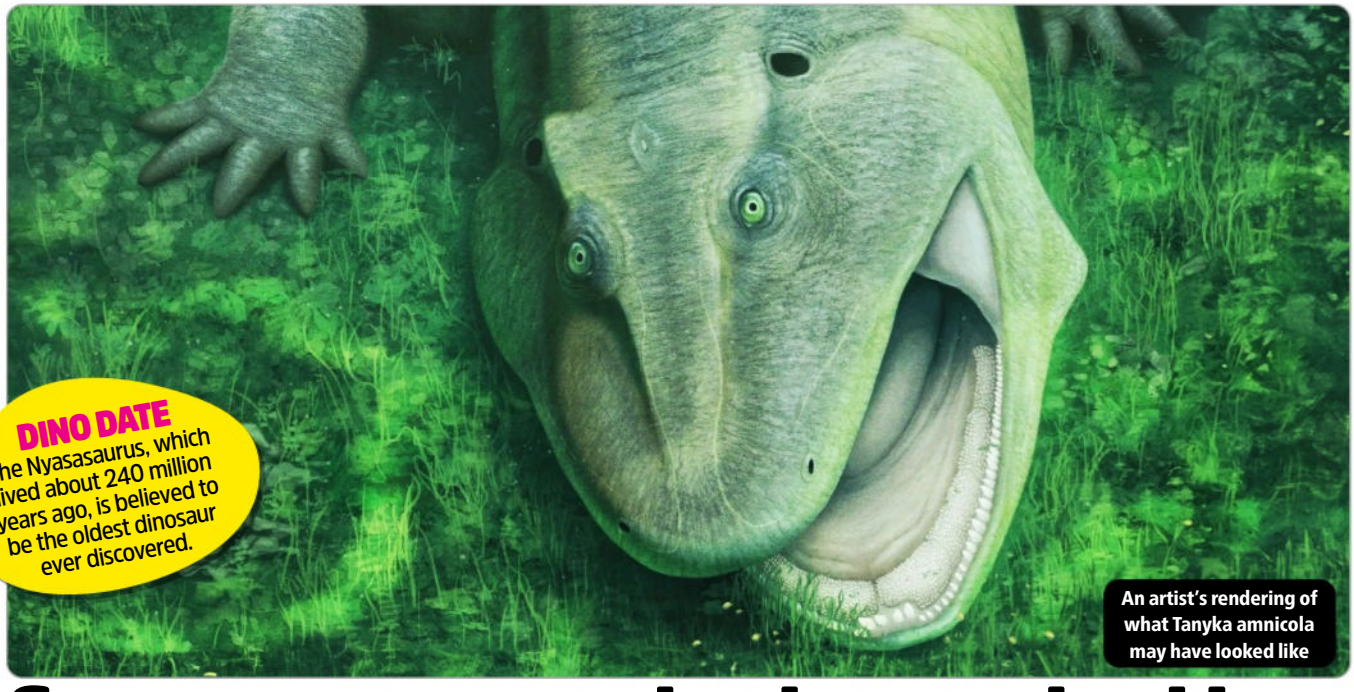
Penguins typically live between 15 and 20 years in the wild, in large colonies with other penguins. All penguin species except the Galápagos, which lives in the Galápagos Islands, are in the southern hemisphere. They nest on land and hunt in the ocean, eating fish, krill, and squid. Some species, such as Emperor penguins, huddle on land in tight groups to stay warm during frigid Antarctic winters. During breeding season, penguins have courtship rituals to pair with a mate. Gentoo penguins, for example, may present a pebble to a potential partner. After laying eggs, most penguins (male and female) share incubation responsibilities. Penguin chicks are born with fuzzy, soft feathers that are not yet waterproof. After a few months, they shed their downy feathers for waterproof ones and can enter the water.

A station in Antarctica

Challenges and conservation

About half of penguin species are classified as endangered or vulnerable. The African penguin is the most endangered, followed by the Galápagos and the yellow-eyed penguin. Besides natural predators, penguins face human-driven threats. Climate change is causing Antarctic sea ice to decline, affecting where penguins can live and breed. Overfishing forces penguins to compete with other species for food. Scientists at research stations in Antarctica monitor penguin populations and the challenges the animals face. Conservationists are pushing for habitat restoration and more marine protected areas for penguins.

An African penguin



DINO DATE
The Nyasasaurus, which lived about 240 million years ago, is believed to be the oldest dinosaur ever discovered.

An artist's rendering of what Tanyka amnicola may have looked like

Strange creature had a crooked jaw

Scientists in Brazil found the fossilized jawbone of a prehistoric creature that lived 275 million years ago, before dinosaurs existed. The animal's twisted jawbone and strange teeth led them to declare it a new species called Tanyka amnicola.

Paleontologists (scientists who study fossils) were digging in the Pedra de Fogo Formation in what is now the Amazon rainforest when they uncovered the upper portion of a jawbone, which was about 6 inches long. It was unlike anything they had seen before, with teeth that faced sideways rather than up, and tiny teeth called denticles running along the interior.

At first, the team thought the jawbone was damaged or deformed. But then they discovered eight additional fossils with a similar shape and realized they were looking at a new species. Researchers determined that the unknown animal belonged to a group called tetrapods, which walked on four legs and evolved into modern-day amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

T. amnicola was a type called a stem tetrapod, which scientists thought had died out long before it was alive. That means the species had survived much longer than its peers.

A salamander

"Tanyka is from an ancient lineage that we didn't know survived to this time, and it's also just a really strange animal," said Jason Pardo, the study's lead author. Pardo and the team called it a "living fossil." T. amnicola also differed from other stem tetrapods because it likely ate plants while they mostly ate meat. Denticles are typically used for grinding up food, including plants.

The team have not found the creature's upper jaw or any other parts of its body, which would help them get a sense of what the rest of the animal looked like. Although they can't say for sure, they think T. amnicola resembled a salamander with a longer snout. It lived in lakes and could have been about 3 feet long.

When T. amnicola was alive, Brazil was part of a supercontinent called Gondwana that included what is now South America, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica. Very few fossils from this period have survived in these areas. The discovery can help scientists fill in the gaps in the historical timeline.

"Tanyka is telling us about how this community actually worked, how it was structured, and who was eating what," said Ken Angielczyk, a co-author of the paper.

Walking upright

A rendering of the reptile

Scientists recently discovered the fossils of a peculiar ancient reptile that walked on four legs when it was young before switching to two legs later in life. They determined that it was a new species and named it Sonselasuchus cedrus. It lived in what is now Arizona about 215 million years ago and was about the size of a poodle.

S. cedrus had hollow bones, a large eye socket, and a toothless beak. After studying the fossils of more than 35 individuals, researchers found that as the creatures grew older, their hind limbs grew stronger and longer, helping them make the switch to walking on two legs. Though S. cedrus displayed ostrich-like behavior, such as using two legs, it was more closely related to modern-day crocodiles.

How do cats always land on their feet?

Cats are known for always landing on their feet, but scientists haven't known exactly why. A new study found that an especially flexible part of the spine helps falling felines stay upright.

Scientists have studied falling cats since at least 1894, when a French researcher took photos of a cat landing on its feet. Three main theories have arisen.

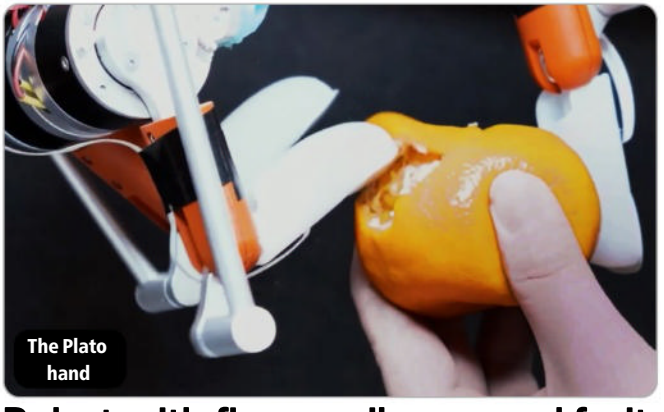
One is that cats use the "propeller" method, swinging their tail one way and rotating their body the other way. Another theory, the "bend and twist" approach, involves cats bending into a right angle, then twisting their front and back halves in opposite directions. A third idea is that cats adjust in the air with the "tuck and turn" method. As they fall, they tuck in their front or back paws and turn that part of their body, then tuck in and turn the other part.

WOW! In 2025, a cat named Oscar, who lived in Texas, set a world record by jumping a distance of 8 feet 5 inches.

Scientists from Yamaguchi University in Japan studied cats' spines and found that the middle section can twist much farther and more easily than the lower part. In the safety of a lab, they dropped two cats onto thick cushions from a height of about 3 feet. They recorded the animals falling on high-speed video and saw that the cats first turned their front legs and upper body to look at the ground, then turned the rest of their body.

This would make the "tuck and turn" method possible, but the team said they can't prove it yet. They plan to conduct more research, including creating 3D computer models to figure out the mechanics of this feline feat.

Cats in the study rotated to the right as they fell.



The Plato hand

Robot with fingernails can peel fruit

A new type of robotic hand has fingernails that let it perform challenging tasks, like peeling an orange, opening a lid, and picking up flat objects. The Plato hand has three fingers and oval-shaped rigid nails that use pressure to pull objects up.

Most robotic hands have square fingers with soft tips, which helps them grasp and grab but isn't great for precise movements. Scientists realized that altering the shape of the fingertips and making them more rigid would help a robotic hand perform complex maneuvers.

Researchers found that the fingernail applied more force to flat objects and focused pressure in one spot, giving the hand a tighter grip. Fingers with nails were also better at picking up curved items, pulling a single sheet of paper from a stack, and opening lids compared to the soft fingers without the nail. Next, the experts say they want to create an entire robotic hand.

AMAZING INVENTION

A device that measures farts

The sensor clips into underwear.

Knowing how often people fart can help scientists learn more about their digestive systems, but capturing data can be tricky. Now a team at the University of Maryland has created a small, discreet device that clips into underwear. The device has sensors that measure hydrogen, which is one of the gases released in people's farts.

The Smart Underwear device found that people fart about 32 times a day, which is more than scientists thought. It will be used in a large study that will also collect data on people's diets and gut bacteria, day and night.

GETTY IMAGES; D.H. KANG ET AL/ARXIV, 2026; UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND; ON LEFT PAGE: KEN ANGIELCZYK, FIELD MUSEUM; GABRIEL UGUETO; GETTY IMAGES

Photos of the week

2026 BRITISH WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS FINALISTS

Bugging out
A leaf-cutter bee peeks out of a hole in this photo taken by Jamie Smart.

All ears
Sarah Darnell took this photo of two brown hares.

Rest stop
A mute swan sleeps on its sibling in this image by Ben Lucas.

SARAH DARNELL; FELIX BELLOIN; BARRY WEBB; JAMES LYNOTT; BEN LUCAS; JAMIE SMART

Photos of the week

Fungus among us
This close-up of a water droplet covering two slime molds was taken by Barry Webb.

Glow time
James Lynott used UV light to bring out the biofluorescence of a spiny squat lobster.

Sitting still
Felix Belloin captured this image of a red fox in a garden.

TOP STARS
UConn's Sarah Strong and Duke University's Cameron Boozer won several of this season's biggest college basketball player of the year honors.

UCLA and Michigan win NCAA titles

On April 5 and 6, the women's and men's NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) basketball tournaments, known as March Madness, ended after more than two weeks of exhilarating action. UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) won the women's title, and the University of Michigan won the men's title.

In the women's final, UCLA, a number one seeded (ranked) team in the tournament, defeated the University of South Carolina, another number one seed, 79–51. It was UCLA's first-ever women's basketball title in the NCAA women's basketball era, which began in 1982. They ended the season 37–1.

Lauren Betts

In the semifinals, UCLA beat the University of Texas, and South Carolina upset the defending champions, UConn (University of Connecticut), who had not lost a game all season.

In the April 5 final, UCLA always held the lead. After five minutes, they were up 13–4. They led 36–23 at halftime and outscored South Carolina, 25–9, in the third quarter. UCLA's 28-point win is the third-largest margin of victory ever in a women's final. Six seniors scored every UCLA point in their last two games. Senior Lauren Betts was named Most Outstanding Player (MOP) of the women's tournament.

In the April 6 men's championship game, Michigan, a number one seed, used strong defense and late-game execution to defeat second-seeded UConn, 69–63, and win its second title, the first since 1989. UConn had been trying to win their third title in four years.

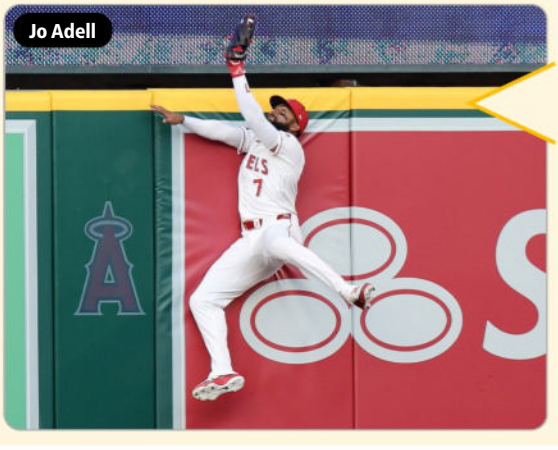
Michigan made the final with a win over another one seed, the University of Arizona, while UConn beat third-seeded University of Illinois. Michigan held off several UConn rallies in the second half of the final, and the game's decisive moment came with just under two minutes to play. UConn was down 62–56 and missed a chance to score off a Michigan turnover. Michigan's Trey McKenney then made a three-pointer, and the nine-point lead ended up being too much for UConn to overcome.

Michigan's Elliot Cadeau, who had 19 points in the final, was the MOP of the men's tournament.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

ICE HOCKEY

On April 4, the New York Sirens earned a 2–1 shootout win over the Seattle Torrent in the first PWHL (Professional Women's Hockey League) game ever held at Madison Square Garden in New York City. There were 18,006 fans at the game, a new record for pro women's hockey in the US. Two Sirens stars were goalkeeper Kayle Osborne, who made 20 saves, and Sarah Fillier, who scored in regulation and the penalty shootout.


Jo Adell

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

The Los Angeles Angels beat the Seattle Mariners, 1–0, on April 4. Angels outfielder Jo Adell made three home-run-stealing catches in the game, including one in the ninth inning where he ended up in the right field stands.

CLUB SOCCER

In MLS action on April 4, Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC) defeated Orlando City, 6–0. Denis Bouanga scored three goals in eight minutes for LAFC, whose record increased to 5–0–1.

Louisville Kings vs. Orlando Storm

FAMILY CONNECTION NFL star quarterback Tua Tagovailoa's younger brother, Taulia, signed with the UFL's Houston Gamblers this season.

Big changes for UFL season

The UFL (United Football League), a spring pro football league, kicked off its third season on March 27. The league has eight teams, and the regular season lasts 10 weeks. The DC Defenders are the reigning champions, and the Birmingham Stallions won the title in 2024.

During the offseason, UFL teams that were based in Tennessee, Texas, and Michigan were relocated to Ohio, Kentucky, and Florida. They are now playing as the Columbus Aviators, Louisville Kings, and Orlando Storm. Meanwhile, the Houston Roughnecks were renamed the Houston Gamblers, and the Arlington Renegades were renamed the Dallas Renegades.

Some of the UFL game rules were changed this year too. For example, now a field goal made from 60 yards or more will be worth four points instead of three, and overtimes will follow a shootout format, with each team getting three chances to score from the five-yard line.

Week One winners were the Renegades, the Storm, the Stallions, and the St. Louis Battlehawks, who upset the Defenders. In Week Two, the Defenders bounced back and beat the Aviators, 44–26, on April 3. Defenders running back Deon Jackson rushed for 97 yards and three touchdowns in the game. The next day, the Storm improved to 2–0, with a 19–9 win over the Kings. Storm quarterback Jack Plummer threw for 182 yards and two touchdowns.

In an exciting game on April 5, the Stallions had a one-point lead over the Renegades with just over two minutes remaining, but Houston kicked a field goal as time expired and won, 22–20.

COACH OF THE WEEK

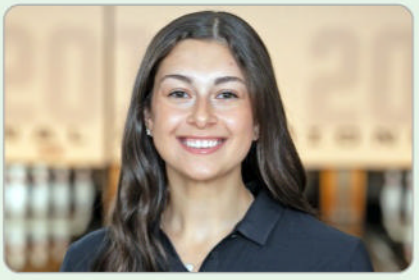
Coach's Name: **Jon Cook**

Team: **ISC (Iowa Soccer Club)**

"I love having Jon as my coach for countless reasons. One of the biggest ones is that he will always push us to try our best. He is super caring, empathetic, and the most hardworking person I know! When someone makes a mistake, he makes sure they know how to fix it and helps them get better! Jon always knows how to help you improve, not just as a soccer player but as a person, a teammate, and a friend." Max, 14, Iowa

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com.* Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

SPOTLIGHT ON...



Victoria Varano

AGE: 21 SPORT: BOWLING
TEAM: VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Family game My grandfather owned a bowling center, and my dad was a part owner—I grew up there. My older sister bowled in high school, won a college national championship, and went pro. When she was winning big tournaments, I thought it was pretty cool, so I started taking bowling more seriously. I started competing nationally around the age of 11.

Busy routine I usually practice six days a week. We lift weights as a team twice a week, and I try to go in an extra day or two. When we travel to compete, we leave on Wednesday and come back on Sunday.

Lane life College bowling has both team and individual formats. On Fridays and Sundays, we compete in Baker matches. In those, five people on your team each bowl two frames in one game. On Saturdays, we bowl individual games. Switching from individual competitions was hard, but now I prefer competing as a team.

Regular ritual Every time I compete, I style my hair with a side braid going into a ponytail.

Big moments My freshman year, we won the college national championship. I've also competed for Junior Team USA and went to the World Championships. We won a silver medal as a team, and I won a bronze in singles, so that was pretty cool. It was my first international bowling experience.

Her advice Stay consistent and don't doubt yourself. If you're getting into a sport, know you're not going to start out as the best. But if you slowly work at it and get help, the progress will pay off.

GETTY IMAGES; VANDERBILT ATHLETICS(2); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (4)

FACT FILE
The Whitney Museum of American Art is the only major museum dedicated exclusively to American art and artists.

Art in the Whitney Biennial

Famous art event underway

The Whitney Biennial in New York City showcases contemporary pieces.

Every two years, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City presents a major exhibition to highlight works by American artists that the museum's curators (people who select art) believe represent the trends and core ideas currently shaping art and culture. The Whitney Biennial 2026, which recently opened, is the 82nd edition of the event and includes pieces by 56 artists, duos, and collectives. This year, it includes some artists from outside the US. It will run through August 23.

The Whitney Biennial is the longest-running showcase of American art in the US. It traditionally features a mix of works from both famous and emerging, lesser-known artists. This year's co-curators, Marcela Guerrero and Drew Sawyer, visited about 300 artist studios during the planning process. The pair chose to present art that explores the idea of "relationality," which refers to the connections between elements, including nature, technology, and history.

Homo Machina by Gabriela Ruiz

One large installation in the show illustrates the bond between a person and an animal. Emilie Louise Gossiaux's *Kong Play* was inspired by the artist's guide dog, London, who died last year. It represents Gossiaux's vision of dog heaven and features a platform covered with 100 colorfully painted ceramic replicas of London's favorite type of chew toy. Several of the artist's drawings of London are hung near the installation. Another big piece is *Blowhard* by Pat Oleszko, an inflatable clown head blowing fire from a trumpet (above).

Ash Arder's piece *Consumables* was inspired by industrial manufacturing and the delicate nature of certain systems. It features car hood ornaments made of butter, shea butter, and chocolate, housed in a solar-powered refrigerator.

The show also has works focused on the history and identity of Indigenous people (first to inhabit a land), such as *She Must Be a Matriarch*, a horse sculpture by Anna Tsouhlarakis (above, top right). The Biennial's multimedia installations include *Cultus* by Zach Blas (above, bottom right), which is about the tech industry and was made using AI. Another piece related to technology is Gabriela Ruiz's *Homo Machina*, a ceramic self-portrait sculpture displaying video and surveillance footage.

Guerrero hopes visitors will leave the museum with a "banquet of feelings," including frustration and glee, and said she hopes people "stay with the wonder" of what they've seen.

Matisse works on display

A new exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago is highlighting early works by French artist Henri Matisse (1869–1954). He is famous for making art with cut pieces of paper he arranged into scenes and reproduced as prints using a stencil technique. He began using the groundbreaking style while he was recovering from surgery and unable to paint.

Matisse introduced his cutout style in *Jazz*, a 1947 art book. The museum's exhibition, *Matisse's Jazz: Rhythms in Color*, features all 20 images from the book, which are on display together for the first time since 1948. The subjects include circuses, travels to Tahiti, myths, and personal memories.

Visitors to the exhibition can also see more than 50 other works that show how Matisse experimented with art later in his life. The exhibition will run through June 1.

MOVIE MAGIC
To simulate the murmur of a crowd in the background of a film scene, voice actors repeat the word "walla" over and over.

The Disability Loop Group

Disabled actors make film history

The hit animated film *GOAT*, which was released in February, tells a story about a talented athlete, Will, who wants to compete in a sport dominated by players who are much bigger than he is. It was loosely inspired by NBA (National Basketball Association) star Stephen Curry, who voiced one of the characters. The actors who recorded the film's background voices—called a loop group—were also notable. *GOAT* was the first major studio film to use a loop group entirely made up of individuals with disabilities.

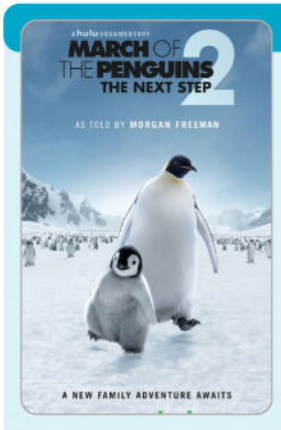
Will in *GOAT*

The actors who did the work in *GOAT* are known as The Disability Loop Group, and they include people with physical or other disabilities. The group was created in 2024 through the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge (EDFC), a filmmaking contest that requires all entries to have a person with a disability in the film or behind the camera. The EDFC was founded 13 years ago by disabled actor and comedian Nic Novicki, who was part of the nearly two dozen actors in *GOAT*'s loop group. Their voices can be heard in the opening scene, chanting "Roots run deep!" in a sports arena. They also voiced the crowds in other arena scenes.

GOAT co-director Adam Rosette, who is hard of hearing, believes that the actors gave the film more meaning. In a video about the film, he said, "We've got underdogs everywhere in the cast, in the background voices of our film—it comes off as authentic, and you can feel it."

Novicki called the historic inclusion of the actors "truly exciting." He told *Variety*, "Like Will in *GOAT*, these talented artists earned a chance to show what they can do."

READER RECOMMENDS



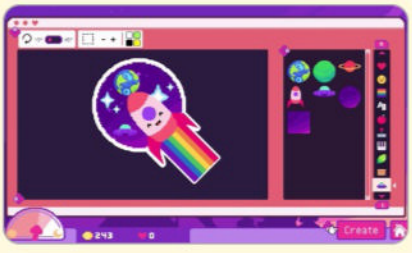
March of the Penguins 2: The Next Step *(Hulu)*
"This documentary follows Emperor penguins in Antarctica. It focuses on a male trying to find food and love. The film shows the daily challenges that Emperor penguins face, such as predatory birds, hunger, thirst, climate change, and wind. Eventually, the film follows the male penguin's son as he starts to grow into an adult. There are beautiful shots of penguins interacting and stunning visuals of the Antarctic environment. It's almost hard to believe the cute penguins are real animals. I highly recommend this documentary to people who like nature, animals, and science." Nicholas, 12, New York

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

3 MORE PICKS TO ENJOY THIS WEEK

WATCH: SUPER ANIMALS

Using graphics inspired by comic books, this fun nature series showcases uniquely skilled animals as if they were superheroes. The new third season includes speedy peregrine falcons and cheetahs, pangolins and other creatures with incredible defenses, and amazing household pets. (National Geographic, Disney+, and Hulu)



PLAY: STICKY BUSINESS

Scarlett, a 12-year-old reader of *The Week Junior*, recommends this simulation game that lets you run an imaginary sticker-making business. Players create custom designs, manage orders, and pack each one with personal touches. Fulfilling requests often reveals mini storylines about a customer's life. (Nintendo Switch, Steam)

WATCH: ARCO

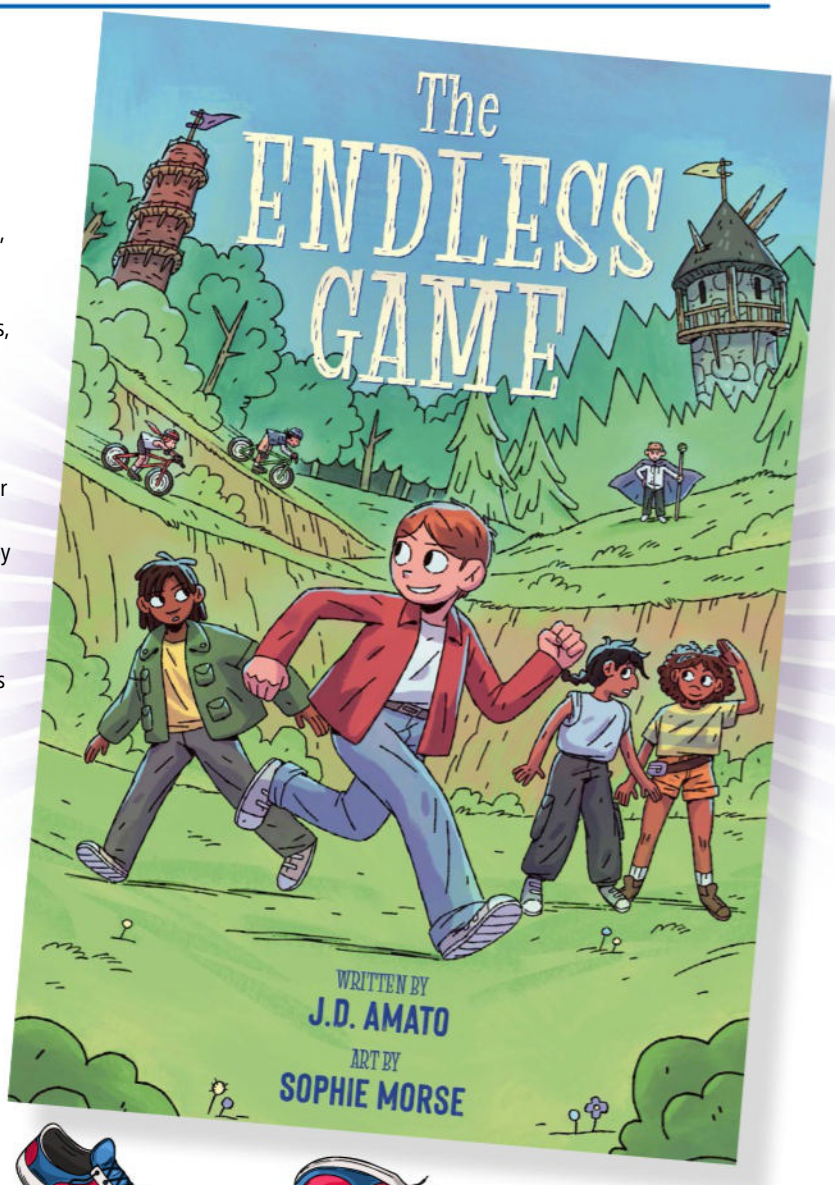
This film was a best animated feature nominee at this year's Academy Awards. It is a sci-fi adventure about a boy from a far-off future who time-travels without permission and crash-lands in the year 2075. He makes a new friend there and, with her help, tries to find a way to return home. (Rent or buy on major platforms)

EASTERSEALS: SONY PICTURES ANIMATION; HULU; PONDS; NINTENDO; REMEMBERS/MOUNTAINA; ON LEFT PAGE: DARIAN DICANNO/BFA.COM © BFA 2026 (2); JASON LOWRIE/BFA.COM © BFA 2026 (2); © 2025 SUCCESSION H. MATISSE/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

THIS WEEK'S BOOK

The Endless Game

By J.D. Amato, illustrated by Sophie Morse



In this fun graphic novel set in the late 1990s, Fred moves to Lakeside, Illinois, and jumps at the chance to be recruited into the town's long-running game of capture the flag.

Lakeside is naturally divided by a stream into two distinct sections, Uphill and Downhill. Each summer since 1923, children from both sides have been competing against one another. Over the decades, the game has evolved, with the teams establishing castle-like headquarters, jails for opponents, and leaders referred to as kings.

Because Fred has moved into the Downhill area, he joins their squad and begins bonding with players Rusty, Kelsey, and the recently appointed King Raquel. She has had to fill the void left by Mike, who was framed for vandalism by the Uphill team's King Jamie and exiled under the game's guidelines.

Fred wants to help Rusty clear Mike's name and contribute to Downhill's defeat of Uphill once and for all. Unfortunately, his dad has new plans that could uproot Fred yet again before the summer is out.

The art includes maps and depicts the intensity of the game while never losing a sense of fun. *Ages 8–12*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR YOUR BOOK CLUB

If you lived in Lakeside, would you sign up to be a player? Why or why not?

What do you think is the significance of the clothes and some of the names of the Uphill players?

How do you think Jamie and Raquel approach leadership differently?

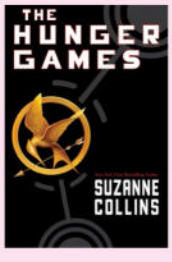
If you could be friends with one of the book's characters, who would it be and why?

Do you think the town takes the game too seriously? Explain.

What is your favorite comic panel in the book? Why did you choose it?

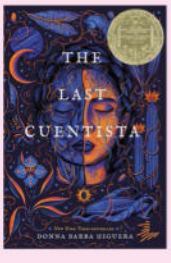
Find your next great read

If you liked…



The Hunger Games
By Suzanne Collins
In this first installment of a trilogy set in a dystopian (miserable) universe, a corrupt government forces children to battle one another in televised contests. Katniss, age 16, volunteers to take her younger sister's place. *Ages 12+*

You might like…



The Last Cuentista
By Donna Barba Higuera
This story, which won a Newbery Medal, was inspired by Mexican folklore. After a comet destroys the Earth, a 12-year-old wakes up on a new planet. She must elude evil forces who erase people's memories for the "greater good." *Ages 10+*

Guess the book this quote comes from

"Sometimes you never feel meaner than the moment you stop being mean. It's like how turning on a light makes you realize how dark the room had gotten."

Hint: It appears in a time-travel mystery set in the 1970s.

Answer: *When You Reach Me*, a Newbery Medal–winning novel by Rebecca Stead. In the book, Miranda realizes that while she didn't participate in bullying a classmate, she never offered to help either.

THIS WEEK'S AUTHOR

J.D. Amato

Television writer, director, and producer J.D. Amato recalls the fun summer days of his childhood growing up outside Chicago, Illinois, and how those memories led him to write his first book for middle-grade readers.

What inspired *The Endless Game*?

I moved around a lot as a child, and I ended up in a town where many kids played outside together. On one of the first days after my family moved in, there was a knock at the door and it was a group of kids asking if my sister and I could come out to play. For the book, I imagined what it would be like if an entire town played an outdoor game together.

Why did you choose the late '90s as the time frame for the story?

That was when I grew up, when kids didn't have things like cell phones or easy access to the internet. The way we interacted as kids was mostly through playing games outside and having to figure out our own fun. I want readers of my book to see that there was a time—and there can still be one now—when kids could be outside exploring the world.

What made you want to write a middle-grade book?

I wanted to write the kind of book that I would have loved to read myself at that age—an adventurous story with many different characters and twists and turns.

What are some books that influenced you while you were growing up?

One series was the *Goosebumps* books by R.L. Stine. They were the first books I really got into and excited about. They made me think stories could be anything and go anywhere, and reading them felt like an adventure. The series of *Harry Potter* books came out while I was growing up, and that was very exciting! Another book that I found really fun and engaging was *The Neverending Story*.

What games did you play as a child?

Like the character Fred in my book, I played a lot of capture the flag. My friends and I also loved playing flashlight tag in the dark.

What do you enjoy about the summer season?

Popsicles and being outside on my bike.

Reader recommends

Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow

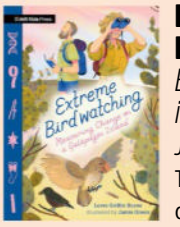
By Jessica Townsend

"Morrigan Crow is a cursed girl who is destined to die on her 11th birthday. She escapes death when a character named Jupiter North takes her away to a secret city called Nevermoor. There, Morrigan is invited to a prestigious organization called the Wundrous Society. But first she must pass four difficult trials. This is a long book, but it's worth making the time for. I finished the next book in the series, which I also recommend!" Hazel, 11, Colorado

Do you have a book to recommend? We want to hear about it! With an adult's help, please send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

Books for beginner bird-watchers

Field guides and real-life adventures help a new hobby take flight.



Extreme Birdwatching

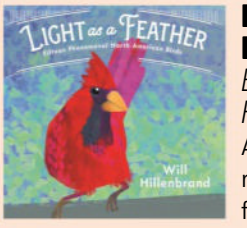
By Loree Griffin Burns, illustrated by Jamie Green

This fascinating book details the experiences of scientists who traveled to the Galápagos Islands in South America to study finches (a type of songbird) found almost nowhere else in the world. They tracked the birds' behavior patterns for decades and learned about their evolution as a species. *Ages 8–12*

A Kid's Guide to Backyard Birds

By Eliza Berkowitz

Have you ever spotted a bird and wondered what kind it is? This guide may help you identify it. The book contains beautiful illustrations of more than 20 common bird species, as well as maps showing where they're likely to be seen in the US. It also includes fun facts. For example, a pigeon drinks by dipping its beak in water and sucking through it like a straw. *Ages 7+*



Light as a Feather

By Will Hillenbrand

A picture book reveals the fascinating habits and characteristics of 15 types of North American birds. You'll discover what makes bluebirds so blue, why blue jays hide acorns, and how Baltimore orioles build incredible nests. The full-page watercolor illustrations are stunning. *Ages 6+*

Find out more about *The Week Junior* Book Club and check out our previous titles at kids.theweekjunior.com/bookclub.

BOOKS: COURTESY THE PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: SELA SHILONI; GETTY IMAGES

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY
National Poetry Month, which marks 30 years this year, was launched in 1996 by the American Academy of Poets.

Write your own poems

Express your thoughts and ideas during National Poetry Month.

April is National Poetry Month and a great time to celebrate this form of creative expression. Many writers enjoy poetry in part because there are no real rules to writing a poem. However, there are some helpful guidelines that can get you started.

Read the work of poets

Reading other poets' work can help you explore what kinds of poetry you might like to write. Ask a teacher for recommendations, or visit your local library and ask a librarian to guide you to the poetry section. The box at right features a few suggestions.

Select a subject

When thinking about what to write, you can start by observing what's around you or considering what you love. It can be anything, such as a sport you're passionate about, a favorite pet, or a memorable place you've visited. You can also draw inspiration from causes that matter to you, such as protecting the planet.

Consider different poetic forms

In rhyming poems, the first line may rhyme with the second, the third line may rhyme with the fourth, and so on. Other common styles include free verse, in which you can rhyme or not rhyme at all, and lines more closely resemble the patterns of everyday speech. In a haiku, a Japanese form of poetry, the first and third lines have five syllables and the middle one has seven. To explore more types of poetry and poets, check out poetryfoundation.org.

Discover your poetry style.

Start writing

Keep a small notebook or a note on your device dedicated to jotting down your ideas. Write down anything that strikes you, from colors to sights to sounds. From there, you can start writing your poem. Once your poem is finished, put it away for a day. Then look at it again and make any edits until you're happy with the final version.

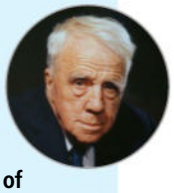
Share it with someone

After you finish, read your poem to a family member, a teacher, or even your pet. Saying a poem out loud brings it to life. You may also find that other people relate to your poem. If you write a poem, we'd love to read it! Please have a parent or guardian send it to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

3 legendary poets

Langston Hughes was known for writing about the everyday lives of Black Americans. Among his works was a book of poems for children, *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*. *Ages 8–12*

Nikki Giovanni was called a "poet of the people" because of her simple language about complex issues. One of her collections is *Ego-Tripping and Other Poems for Young People*. *Ages 10–16*



Robert Frost was voted "class poet" in high school, and his work was often inspired by life in New England. Some of his famous poems can be found in the book *Poetry for Kids: Robert Frost*. *Ages 8–14*

KITCHEN WISDOM
To cut back on tears from chopping onions, chill onions first and cut into the root ends last.

WARNING!
Ask an adult's permission before using a knife, stove, or oven.

Ladle up a bowl of toasty French onion soup

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 6 cups beef broth
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves stripped from stems
- 1 cup shredded Gruyère cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 slices French bread (about ½-inch thick)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Instructions

1. Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add the olive oil and onions and cook, stirring often, until the onions are golden brown and very soft, about 25 minutes.
2. Increase heat to medium-high and add the sherry vinegar. Using a long-handled spoon, scrape up any bits from the bottom of the pot.
3. Add the Worcestershire sauce, beef broth, and thyme leaves and bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat once again and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, preheat the broiler and combine the cheeses in a small bowl. Toast the bread.
5. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, then ladle into four oven-proof bowls or crocks set on a baking sheet.
6. Float a piece of toast on each bowl then top with a portion of the Gruyère and Parmesan cheese mix.
7. Broil until the cheese is melted and bubbly, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.

ECO TIP OF THE WEEK: PLANT OR CARE FOR A TREE IN YOUR AREA

National Arbor Day is an observance that celebrates the role of trees in our lives and promotes tree planting and care. Trees help clean our air, provide food and shelter for wildlife, reduce flooding, and serve as natural wind and sound barriers. You can celebrate trees in several ways. One is to talk to your family about planting a tree. You can visit a local nursery to ask about tree species and the best time to plant a seedling (young tree). Your local government's parks or public works department may have a tree restoration program and will plant a tree in front of your home for free if you ask. You can also "adopt" a tree in your area and, with an adult's help, care for it by clearing away litter and weeds.

National Arbor Day is April 24.

ERICA CLARK FOR STONE KITCHEN CREATIVE; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Crisscross

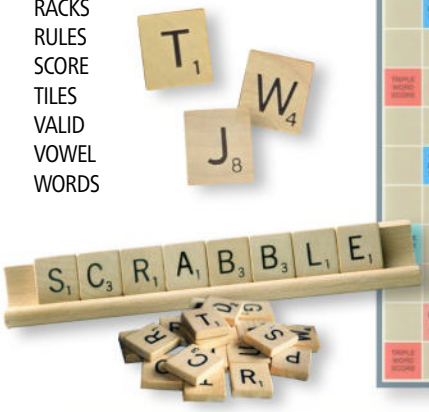
Each of these words associated with Scrabble fits into this grid. Can you find where each one goes to complete the grid?

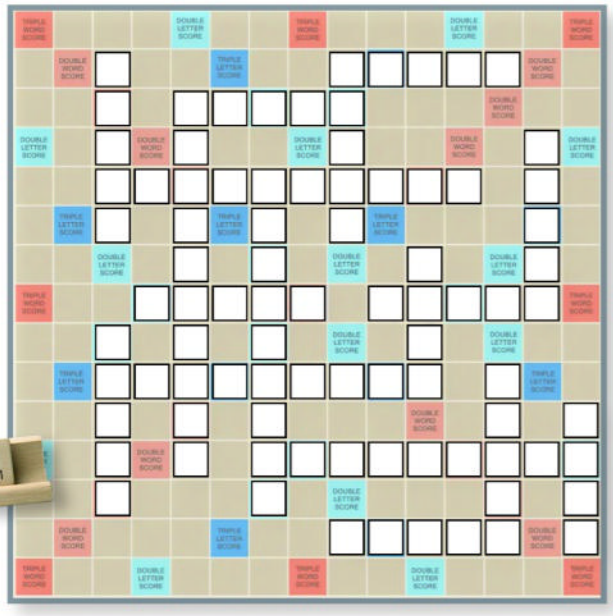
4 letters
GAME
STAR

5 letters
BINGO
BLANK
BOARD
RACKS
RULES
SCORE
TILES
VALID
VOWEL
WORDS

9 letters
CHALLENGE
CONSONANT
INTERLOCK

10 letters
DICTIONARY
VOCABULARY





Take five

Five 5-letter things associated with the heart are hidden in this grid. For each one, the first letter is somewhere in the first column, the second is somewhere in the second column, and so on. Can you find all five? (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

B	O	L	T	E
A	U	E	V	T
C	A	O	S	D
P	H	L	O	A
V	L	R	S	E

ALL THE SAME

Each answer contains the letters D-E-N. Those letters have been placed for you. Can you figure out the words?

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

1. Blue jeans material — DEN☐☐
2. White House resident — ☐☐☐☐☐DEN☐
3. Scandinavian country where Hans Christian Andersen was born — DEN☐☐☐☐
4. You, when you're at school — ☐☐☐DEN☐
5. Where Adam and Eve lived — ☐☐☐DEN ☐☐ ☐DEN

SUDOKU

To complete the grid, place the numbers from 1 to 6 exactly once in each row, column, and 2x3 bold-lined box.

		6			1
	2			6	
6			5		
		5			3
	3			5	
5			4		

Spot the difference

These two pictures of a girl bird-watching appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

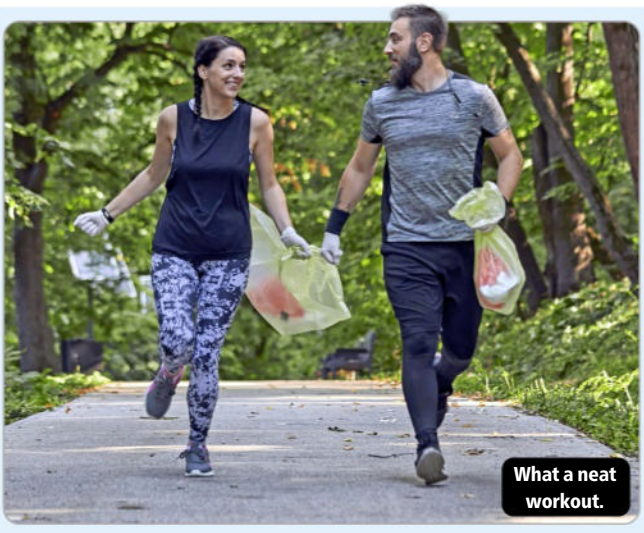
PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

Take five hint: The word that begins with A ends with A.

It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Emy!

An out-of-this-world adventure

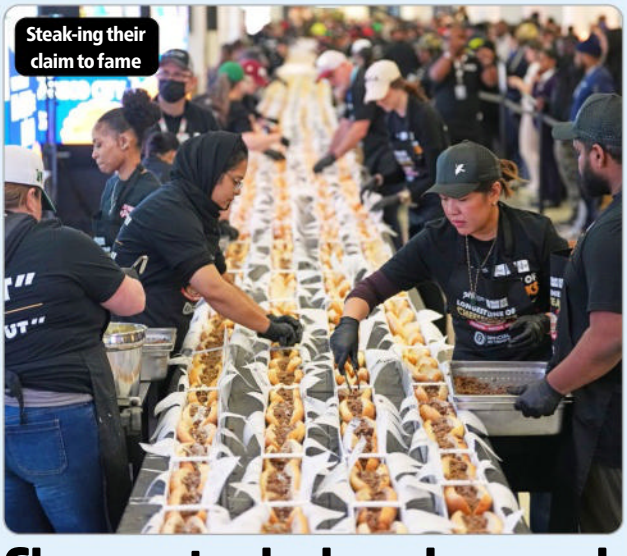
A stuffed "minipet" named Emy recently made a high-flying journey. Emy took off from New York in a high-altitude balloon and rose about 116,000 feet into the stratosphere before gently falling back to Earth. Thanks to her light weight and slow descent, she returned intact and landed safely in a tree. The tech company that created Emy has been dropping her from increasing heights to inspire young people to spend time outside in nature. More than 1 million fans follow her adventures on Instagram.



What a neat workout.

Trash cleanup becomes a sport

Ready, set, plog! An eco-friendly activity from Sweden has become a global fitness trend. Known as plogging, it combines jogging with picking up litter. Groups like the New York Road Runners (NYRR) organize plogging events to help people socialize while cleaning up streets and parks. Proponents also say it's a more thorough workout than a simple run. "As you're bending over to grab some trash, you're doing some squats, you can do some lunges," said Aly Criscuolo of NYRR. "You're working on some leg strength as well."



Steak-ing their claim to fame

Cheesesteaks break record

Typically, long lines at the airport are an unwelcome sight, but on March 24, people were happy to see one at Philadelphia International Airport. To celebrate National Cheesesteak Day, workers assembled 1,291 of Philly's signature sandwiches on long tables between two airport terminals. The line of cheesesteaks stretched farther than the length of three football fields, breaking a world record. After the record was set, the meaty masterpiece became lunch for travelers and airport staff.

Real or fake?

Is it cuke couture?

A jacket that's in a real pickle

This new coat is kind of a big dill! Fast-food giant KFC has created a limited-edition transparent jacket that is filled with sliced pickles and green brine. It even features a built-in straw so people can relish every last bit of pickle juice. The company is giving away the pickle puffer on social media as part of a promotion for KFC's Pickle Mania, which features special menu items such as a pickle burger, pickle-loaded fries, and even pickle-flavored soda. Is this story the real dill, or does something smell sour?*

*Real! To advertise Pickle Mania in the UK, KFC made a jacket that's filled with pickles and brine and has a pickle-shaped zipper. One lucky winner on social media will look cool as a cucumber in this fashion statement.

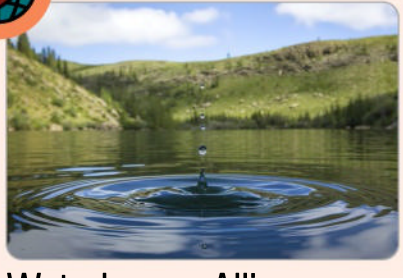
GETTY IMAGES (2); @EMYADVENTURE / INSTAGRAM; AP; KFC; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3); ALAMY

Editor's note

We have reported on NASA's Artemis II mission in *The Week Junior* many times, from the announcement of what the purpose would be to the selection of the crew to the many preparations made before the launch. And all of it was exciting. But this week, the excitement reached a new level as the Orion spacecraft lifted off from Kennedy Space Center and headed toward the Moon. Our entire team watched in amazement, and I'm guessing many of our readers did too! There was so much information to include about this historic moment that we decided to devote our entire Big News section to it this week (p2–3). We hope you'll enjoy reading about what's happening aboard the spacecraft, who the astronauts are, and what's next for Artemis—as well as a few fun stories in our Amazing Week column. News like this doesn't happen very often. We're grateful for the opportunity to share it with you.

Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

CHARITY OF THE WEEK



GETTY IMAGES

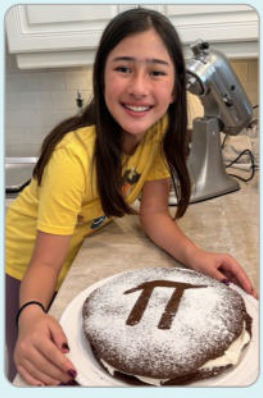
Waterkeeper Alliance

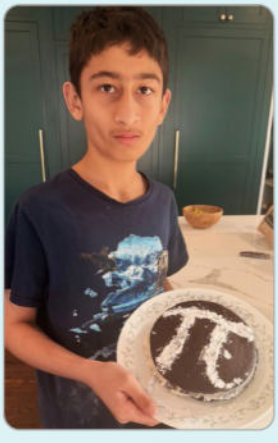
This organization's goal is to ensure that everyone has drinkable, fishable, and swimmable water. Waterkeeper Alliance raises funds, recruits volunteers, and works with groups in 47 countries to keep water free of pollution. Since its founding, it has protected more than 6.2 million square miles of waterways through more than 330 waterkeeper groups. Find out more at waterkeeper.org.

WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE

CELEBRATING PI DAY ON MARCH 14!

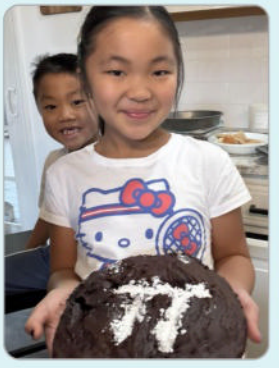
Thank you to everyone who sent us photos of the whoopie pies they made using our recipe from Issue 307 in honor of Pi Day on March 14. More than 100 of you shared photos, and we enjoyed seeing each and every one of them!

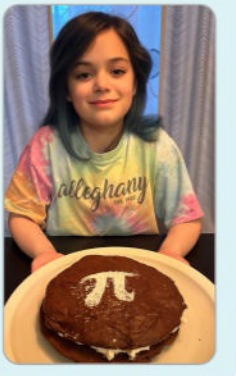




THE WEEK Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

Your turn



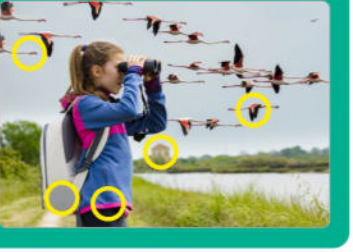


Puzzle answers (from page 26)

Take five
blood
aorta
chest
pulse
valve

All the same
1. denim
2. president
3. Denmark
4. student
5. Garden of Eden

3	5	6	2	4	1
1	2	4	3	6	5
6	1	3	5	2	4
2	4	5	6	1	3
4	3	2	1	5	6
5	6	1	4	3	2



Quiz answers (from page 30) **1** True **2** b) The Whitney Museum **3** c) 32 **4** b) 6:35 p.m. **5** Four **6** True **7** a) 17 **8** Capture the flag **9** c) Lauren Betts **10** False. It is mostly seen in the Eastern US. **11** Loop group **12** b) Blue **13** Emancipation Proclamation **14** False. It found that raccoons solve puzzles for fun. **15** a) Cheesesteaks

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 True or false? Hedgehogs can hear high-pitched sounds that humans and dogs cannot detect.

True ☐ False ☐

2 Which institution in the US hosts the longest-running event showcasing American art?

a) The Getty Museum

b) The Whitney Museum

c) The Guggenheim Museum

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

3 A sensor that clips into underwear revealed that people fart about how many times a day?

a) 13 b) 24 c) 32

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

4 At what time on April 1 did NASA's Artemis II mission launch?

a) 5:35 p.m. b) 6:35 p.m. c) 7:35 p.m.

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

5 In the United Football League, field goals made from at least 60 yards will now be worth how many points?

6 True or false? A recent study found that a flexible part of the spine helps cats land on their feet.

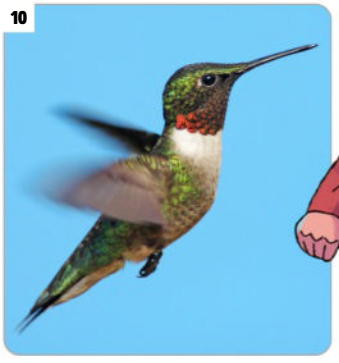
True ☐ False ☐

7 Swimmer Janet Evans made her Olympic debut at what age?

a) 17 b) 21 c) 25

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

8 In the graphic novel *The Endless Game*, children in Lakeside play an elaborate version of what game?



ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

9 Who was named the Most Outstanding Player of the women's NCAA college basketball tournament?

a) Gabriela Jaquez

b) Kiki Rice

c) Lauren Betts

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

10 True or false? The ruby-throated hummingbird is most often seen migrating through the western US.

True ☐ False ☐

11 What is the term for the group of actors who provide background voices for a film?

12 Which species of penguin is the smallest in the world?

a) Adélie

b) Blue

c) Hoiho

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

13 What 1863 document was recently added to the rotunda display at the National Archives in Washington, DC?

14 True or false? A new study found that raccoons solve puzzles only when a reward is available.

True ☐ False ☐

15 Philadelphia International Airport recently set a world record for the longest line of what food items?

a) Cheesesteaks

b) Hot dogs

c) Pizza slices

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

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